

# Facts About Meth

## Meth Fact Sheet

### What is it?

Methamphetamine — also known as meth, crank, crystal, and speed — is a powerfully addictive central nervous system stimulant.

### What does it look like?

Meth is a white, odorless, bitter-tasting powder that easily dissolves in alcohol or water and can be smoked, injected or snorted.

### Where is it made?

Two-thirds of our country's meth supply is produced in super labs in Mexico and Southern California run by organized crime and street gangs. The remaining third is made in the U.S. in makeshift meth labs found in basements, kitchens, garages, bedrooms, barns, vacant buildings, campgrounds, hotels and motels and trunks of cars.

### How is it made?

Meth is made from a fairly simple recipe found on the internet and can be produced in as few as 6 to 8 hours using apparatus and cookware that can be quickly dismantled and stored or relocated to avoid detection. Some of the ingredients commonly used to make meth are over-the-counter cold medications containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, red phosphorous, hydrochloric acid, anhydrous ammonia, drain cleaner, battery acid, lye, lantern fuel, and antifreeze. The fumes, vapors, and spillage associated with cooking meth can be toxic and explosive — and hazardous to children, adults and the environment.

### What are the short-term effects of taking meth?

Immediately after smoking or injection, the user experiences an intense sensation, called a "rush" or "flash," that lasts only a few minutes and is described as extremely pleasurable. (Snorting or swallowing meth produces euphoria — a high, but not a rush.) Following the "rush," there is typically a state of high agitation that in some individuals can lead to violent behavior. Other possible immediate effects include increased wakefulness and insomnia, decreased appetite, irritability/aggression, anxiety, nervousness, convulsions and heart attack.

### What are the long-term effects of taking meth?

Meth is addictive, and users can develop a tolerance quickly, needing larger amounts to get high. In some cases, users forego food and sleep and take more meth every few hours for days, "binging" until they run out of the drug or become too disorganized to continue using. Chronic use can cause paranoia, hallucinations, repetitive behavior (such as compulsively cleaning, grooming or disassembling and assembling objects), and delusions of parasites or insects crawling under the skin. Users can obsessively scratch their skin to get rid of these imagined insects. Long-term use, high dosages, or both can bring on full-blown toxic psychosis. This violent, aggressive behavior is usually coupled with extreme paranoia. Meth can also cause strokes and death.

# Signs of Meth Use

## Meth Fact Sheet

If you think someone you know might be using meth, or you're a parent who suspects your teen might be using, here is a list of warning signs to look for.

### Physical Symptoms:

- Weight loss
- Abnormal sweating
- Shortness of breath
- Nasal problems or nosebleeds
- Sores that do not heal
- Dilated pupils
- Burns on lips or fingers
- Track marks on arms

### Behavioral Symptoms:

- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Change in friends
- Disinterest in previously enjoyed activities
- Increased activity
- Long periods of sleeplessness (24-120 hours)
- Long periods of sleep (24-48 hours)
- Incessant talking
- Irritability
- Twitching and shaking
- Itching
- Decreased appetite
- Erratic attention span
- Repetitious behavior, such as picking at skin, pulling out hair, compulsively cleaning, grooming or disassembling and assembling objects

- Aggression or violent behavior
- False sense of confidence and power
- Convulsions
- Carelessness about appearance
- Deceit or secretiveness

### Mental Symptoms:

- Paranoia
- Anxiousness
- Nervousness
- Agitation
- Extreme moodiness
- Severe depression
- Hallucinations
- Delusions of parasites or insects crawling under the skin.

### Paraphernalia:

- Rolled up paper money or short straws
- Pieces of glass/mirrors
- Razor blades
- Burned spoons
- Surgical tubing
- Syringes/needles

In all cases of meth use, a user may experience a loss of inhibitions and a false sense of control and confidence, which can lead to dangerous behavior.

# What Are the Signs of a Meth Lab?

## Meth Fact Sheet

### What are signs of a meth lab?

A typical meth lab is a collection of chemical bottles, hoses, and pressurized cylinders. The cylinders can take many forms, from modified propane tanks to fire extinguishers, scuba tanks and soda dispensers. The tanks contain anhydrous ammonia or hydrochloric acid — both highly poisonous and corrosive.

Labs are frequently abandoned, and the potentially explosive and very toxic chemicals are left behind. Chemicals may also be burned or dumped in woods or along roads.

**What does a meth lab smell like?** Strong chemical odors such as ether, ammonia (smells like cat urine) and acetone (smells like nail polish)

The most common chemicals used to start the meth-making process are over-the-counter cold and asthma medications which contain ephedrine or pseudoephedrine as decongestants or stimulants.

Here are signs of a meth lab:

- Unusual strong chemical odors such as ether, ammonia (smell similar to cat urine) and acetone (smells similar to fingernail polish)
- Excess amounts of cold medicines containing Ephedrine or pseudoephedrine
- Empty pill bottles or blister packs
- Propane/Freon tanks with blue corrosion on fittings or spray-painted or burned, with bent or tampered valves
- Starting fluid cans opened from the bottom
- Heating sources such as hotplates/torches
- Excess coffee filters
- Excess baggies
- Excess matches
- Excess lithium batteries
- Cookware (Corning type) with white residue

- Glassware, mason jars or other glass containers
- Plastic tubing
- Funnels
- Hoses leading outside for ventilation
- Soft drink bottles with hoses running from them
- Drain cleaner, paint thinner, toluene, denatured alcohol, ammonia, acid, starter fluid, antifreeze, hydrogen peroxide, rock salt/iodine
- Lantern or camp stove fuel
- Iodine- or chemical-stained bathrooms or kitchen fixtures
- Evidence of chemical waste or dumping
- Excessive amounts of trash, particularly chemical containers, coffee filters with red stains, duct tape rolls. Empty cans of or paint thinner or pieces of red-stained cloth around the property
- Secretive or unfriendly occupants
- Extensive security measures or attempts to ensure privacy such as “No Trespassing” or “Beware of Dog” signs, fences, and large trees or shrubs
- Curtains always drawn or windows blackened or covered with aluminum foil on residences, garages, sheds, or other structures
- Increased activity, especially at night
- Frequent visitors, particularly at unusual times
- Renters who pay their landlords in cash

\*\*\* If you suspect a dwelling or property may be an illegal lab, contact your local police, or sheriff's department or call 1-877-787-6384. If it's an emergency, call 911. Do not enter a site that you think may have been used for cooking meth. Meth labs present extreme dangers from explosions and exposure to hazardous chemicals.



# What Are the Risks If I Live Near a Meth Lab?

## Meth Fact Sheet

Meth causes health problems not just for the users, but also for others who are exposed to the chemicals by living in or near a former meth lab.

The risk of injury from chemical exposure depends on the chemical itself, the concentration, the quantity, and the length and route of exposure. Chemicals may enter the body by being breathed, eaten, injected (by a contaminated needle or accidental skin prick), or absorbed by the skin.

**Acute Exposure:** An acute chemical exposure is one that occurs over a relatively short period of time and may result in health effects. An acute exposure to high levels of contaminants found in meth labs cause shortness of breath, cough, chest pain, dizziness, lack of coordination, chemical irritation, lesions and burns to the skin, eyes, mouth and nose, and in severe cases, death. Acute reactions of this nature could occur during or immediately after a drug bust, before the lab has been ventilated.

Less severe symptoms resulting from a less acute exposure cause headache, nausea, dizziness, and fatigue or lethargy. These symptoms have been known to occur in people who have entered a drug lab after the bust has been completed, but before the property has been adequately cleaned and ventilated. These symptoms usually go away after several hours.

**Corrosive Effects:** Inhalation or skin exposure may result in injury from corrosive substances present in a meth lab. Symptoms range from shortness of breath, cough, chest pain, to burns to the skin.

**Solvents:** Exposure to solvents can irritate the skin, mucous membranes, respiratory tract, and cause central nervous system effects. They are also dangerous because of their fire and explosive properties.

**Chronic Exposure:** Chronic exposure occurs over an extended period of time, such as weeks, months, or years. A chronic health effect is one that usually appears after a lengthy period of time, possibly years. Not much is known about the chronic health effects from these labs. However, there is scientific evidence from animal and human toxicity studies that shows the chemicals used to manufacture meth can cause a range of health effects include cancer, damage to the brain, liver and kidneys, birth defects, and reproductive problems, such as miscarriages.

**\*\*\* If you suspect a dwelling or property may be an illegal lab, contact your local police, or sheriff's department or the state hotline at 1-877-787-6384. If it's an emergency, call 911.** Do not enter a site that you think may have been used for cooking meth. Meth labs present extreme dangers from explosions and exposure to hazardous chemicals. Breathing the fumes and handling substances can cause injury and even death. Meth labs are considered hazardous waste sites and should only be entered by trained and equipped emergency-response professionals.